

# IN A GALAXY FAR FAR AWAY... NT STUDENTS WEIGH IN

## Is Episode VII a hit or a miss?

by Marie O'Connor

For the first time in ten years, the Star Wars franchise released another episode, and the massive hype surrounding the release has prompted many first time Star Wars viewers and die-hard fans to the theaters.

It seems as though the culture surrounding Star Wars has attracted a wider audience. In 2012, The Walt Disney Company bought the franchise and announced the creation of the newest Star Wars episode: "The Force Awakens."

Directed by J.J. Abrams, the new movie takes viewers in a more progressive direction by casting a black male lead, John Boyega, as Finn, and a female lead, Daisy Ridley, as Rey.

Senior John Dolan said, "I expected more Disney themes to bleed through, but Disney did a good job sticking to the story line, compared to other series that have been taken over by Disney."

Perhaps it was due to The Walt Disney Company taking over that the targeted audience expanded.

According to junior Paul Miller, "there's a younger audience; I think there was more humor in it so I think it appealed to younger kids too."

Not only has the age group expanded, but the type of person going to see the movie is no longer simply the die-hard Star Wars fan, but others who want to be a part of the fandom.

"My family had always been big Star Wars fans, and I never really got into the old movies, but for the new one I was sort of dragged along for the experience," said Sophomore Ellie Cudmore.

It seems as though many

people had seen only parts of the previous movies, and are generally more interested in the new one. Junior Hannah Miller said, she had seen parts of the other movies, and Paul Miller (no relation) said he had seen all the movies at some time or another when he was younger, but he, "re-watched the fifth movie" before seeing The Force Awakens.

Others, like sophomore Alli Salmon, prepared before going to the new movie. "My dad is a big fan so we watched all the movies, and then we went to see the new one and it was nice because we knew who the characters were and everything made sense," she said.

Despite what some see as contemporary changes to the story line, the new movie also incorporates extensions of plot lines from other episodes.

"I didn't expect to not understand a lot of it; you really needed to see the other movies to completely understand the plot," Hannah Miller said.

Characters are brought back in "The Force Awakens", and plot lines from previous movies are also built upon, while still providing an original story line. Although there are differences, Miller said, "the biggest difference was the new characters."

Cudmore added, "I knew there were all new actors, and all new characters, but that they were going to bring in some old characters and plots, so I was excited to watch some new Star Wars."

A common talking point among both those who had only seen the new movie and those who have seen the entire series was the shocking ending.

And those interviewed were adamant about not spoiling the movie, like Dolan, who said, "I don't want to give anything away."



An official poster for Episode VII, featuring all new characters, such as Finn and Rey | [starwars.com](http://starwars.com)

## Warning: Spoilers Ahead

by Alex Levine

38 years after "Episode IV: A New Hope" blew movie-goers off their feet, the release of "Episode VII: The Force Awakens" signals the reemergence of one of the most iconic movie series of all time.

Disney bought the rights to the franchise for over \$4 billion in 2012, and "The Force Awakens" kicked off a series of Star Wars movies that will release over the next five years.

This time, the plot revolved around destroying yet another Imperial space station, something all too familiar after the Rebel forces did the same thing in "A New Hope." The gracefully aged duo, Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher, brought Han Solo and Leia Skywalker into present day, clearly an homage to the success and popularity of their characters in the original trilogy.

Senior Chris Sonnenshien felt similarly to the way I did after leaving the theater, disappointed. Sonnenshien said, "I was expecting it to be great because of how much it was hyped up, but I just didn't think it was very entertaining."

For other students, the newest installment exceeded expectations.

Junior Carter Heisinger had nothing but high praise for the movie. Heisinger said, "I loved the storyline and the combination of old and new characters"

"The Force Awakens" was a fantastic film, second only to 'A New Hope,'" said Senior Joe Graves, who had a unique idea of why it's so popular among high school students. "It's cool because this is like our generation's Star Wars movie."

For Junior Daniel McNerney, the experience of going on opening night made it memorable. He explained how everyone applauded when the theme song first came on and when Han Solo and the Millennium Falcon made their first appearances. "The environment was so much fun on opening night."

There seemed to be a struggle to showcase the new characters and still give the old stars their well-deserved screen time. "You also want to make way for the new characters to have their own stories. You need to separate this movie from the original trilogy," said Graves.

One of the more prominent characters is the newest leader of the Dark Side, Kylo Ren, who mistakenly takes his helmet off in one scene.

Why he would take off his helmet I have no idea. The whole point of wearing a mask is the added

intimidation factor and to keep the audience guessing as to what Kylo Ren actually looks like.

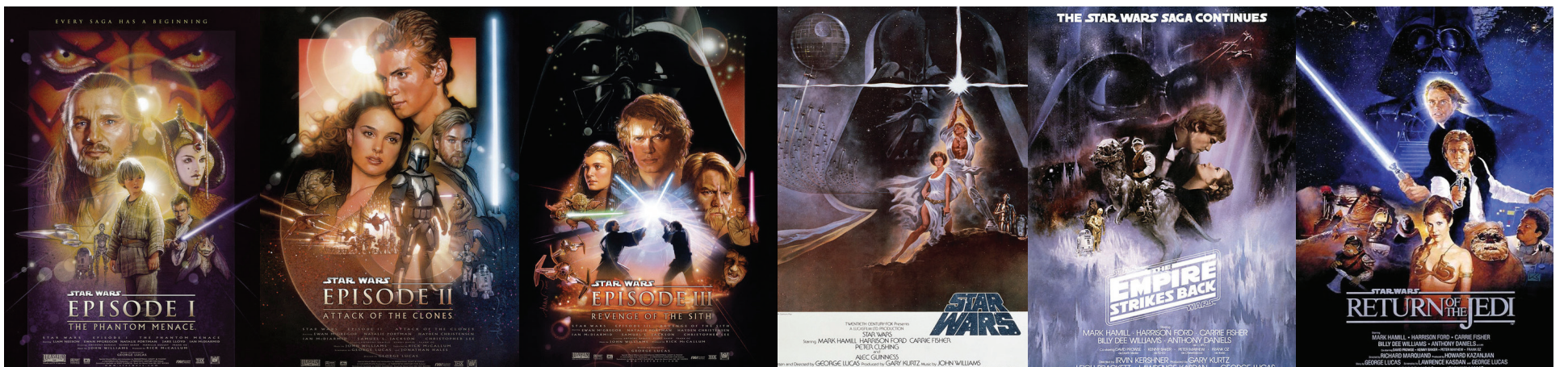
Unlike most people who saw the movie, senior Kevin Brennan had a different opinion of the unmasked villain. "I thought it was good [that he took his helmet off] because it showed that he has insecurities and is more human." A fair point, but now whenever Kylo Ren comes on screen the only thing people will picture is the way he looks without a mask.

R2-D2 was also a familiar face that was not prominent in the new movie. Replacing such an iconic character like R2-D2 is no easy task, but Director J.J. Abrams nailed it.

BB-8, the new droid that takes R2's place aside the star characters, was a clear fan favorite. Senior Grace Paul said, "I absolutely loved all the new characters, especially the new droid. BB-8 was so cute."

Looking ahead to the next installment, Brennan said, "This movie mimicked 'A New Hope' a lot, so I think the next one will be like when Yoda trained Luke Skywalker. Except this time it'll be Luke training Rey."

With such positive reviews, the next addition to the series has a lot of pressure to be as good as A Force Awakens. Episode VIII is set to release in 2017.



## One reporter weighs in: "Force Awakens" is a hit

by Jake Freedman

The latest Star Wars movie reawakened not only the force but the entire series as well. The nostalgic "Force Awakens" brought the integrity and cohesiveness of the original trilogy back to Star Wars after the disappointing prequels.

J.J. Abrams' new movie lived up to massive hype. It created original and comedy-filled characters meeting up with veterans like Han Solo and Chewbacca. When Finn (John Boyega) and Rey (Daisy Redley) are forced to help each other escape the desert planet Jakku, viewers can't help feeling some sort of familiarity: the constant bickering, the desert planet, and finally the escape on the

millennium falcon perfectly connects this new trilogy to the beginnings of Luke and Han's partnership in the original film.

Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) is not just a new Darth Vader, he is his own character entirely. He is completely controlled by his anger that springs from his surprisingly familiar origins. Obsessed with finishing the work of Vader and the Empire, Ren seeks to stop the resistance from finding Luke Skywalker at all costs.

In "A New Hope" little is revealed about who Vader is, which is in contrast to how "The Force Awakens" introduces Kylo Ren with more depth.

Being compared to the originals is exactly what Abrams shot for as the original trilogy was essentially a masterpiece. On Rotten Tomatoes "A New Hope" and "The Empire Strikes Back" received an outstanding 94% approval rating, and "Return of the

Jedi" earned a respectable 80%, but when excitement built up about the release of "The Phantom Menace" in 1999, the movie completely disappointed and Rotten Tomatoes tagged it with a "rotten" 56% approval.

The lack of flow and politically focused plots of the prequels, were nonexistent in "The Force Awakens", bringing promise to the new trilogy.

*"The Force Awakens" gave fans everything they hoped for and brings a new hope to the series as the new trilogy begins.*

"The Force Awakens" received a 93% rating and had the crowd

in the palm of its hands, as every nostalgic moment and every entrance of old characters came with a loud standing ovation.

The movie had a perfect mix of old timers and newcomers, evidenced by scenes like the escape on the Millennium Falcon, or the parallels to "A New Hope's" story.

The humorous and natural interactions between Leia, Luke, Han, and Chewy were completely lacking in prequels, and it was apparent J.J. Abrams made a point to bring it back, this time with a new cast of characters. Arguments between Rey and Finn brought back memories of Han and Leia, and the Star Wars fans got a nice treat as both Chewbacca and Han Solo were not only in the film, but had a lot of screen time.

Along with nostalgia, the movie had some great original characters and components. Kylo Ren brought back the evil of the dark side while

still being tied to the Resistance, and after seeing the movie it is obvious a series can be built around these new characters.

"The Force Awakens" returned to the cohesive and flowing story of the originals, while also succeeding with the CGI effects that the prequels tried and failed to utilize. The new installment in the Star Wars series offered up stunning visuals of planets being destroyed, new ways to use the force, and epic lightsaber battles.

The movie was visually stunning, funny, and it flowed. Viewers will spend the whole movie hoping the next scene is not the last, and when it's over they will eagerly await Episode VIII in May 2016.

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